

Fact Sheet:
U.S. Defense Cooperation in the Americas

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) promotes defense cooperation in the Americas on the basis of equal partnership. In an age of transnational security challenges, nations act unilaterally at their own peril because the problems facing the Western Hemisphere require multinational solutions. Thus, the principal objective of U.S. defense policy in the Americas is to be a partner of choice because collective action is essential for U.S. security and for the security of our hemispheric neighbors. Examples of DoD's partnering efforts are highlighted below:

- **Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas (CDMA) Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Proposal.** At the 2010 CDMA, Secretary of Defense Gates collaborated on a proposal – co-sponsored by thirteen other countries – that seeks to develop a framework for military support to civilian-led disaster relief operations, and to standardize a system for facilitating collaboration among militaries during these crises. The CDMA agreed to support the proposal by forming working groups to further explore the issue in preparation for the 2012 CDMA to be held in Uruguay.
- **Haiti Support.** In response to the 2010 Haiti earthquake, USSOUTHCOM launched Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE and established Joint Task Force (JTF)-Haiti. U.S. forces distributed 2.3 million meals, 17 million pounds of bulk food, 2.6 million bottles of water, and almost 150,000 pounds of medical supplies. DoD medical personnel treated close to 10,000 patients and conducted 1,025 surgeries and 343 medical evacuations. After JTF-Haiti completed its mission, USSOUTHCOM transitioned to humanitarian and civic assistance exercises. For example, engineers have completed thirteen projects that involved building schools, improving wells, and constructing sanitation facilities. In addition, medical forces established several clinics each with a capacity to serve four to five thousand patients.
- **Aid and Assistance Programs.** DoD initiatives include the Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP), Humanitarian Civic Assistance (HCA), Mobile Training Teams, Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and International Military Education and Training (IMET). Through these programs, DoD provides training and funding to partner nations to strengthen disaster response capability, improve defense capacity, enhance cooperation with U.S. forces, increase awareness of basic democratic values such as the protection of human rights, and facilitate regional deployments in support of United Nations peacekeeping operations.
- **Bilateral Working Groups (BWGs).** BWGs are an important mechanism for sustaining relationships in the Americas. DoD currently participates in BWGs with countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. Each BWG is different, with a specific emphasis on issues of most importance to the bilateral relationship. These discussions normally allow for senior-level interaction and result in a structure and

plan for how cooperation will develop. They therefore provide an important guide for U.S. strategic engagement in the region.

- **U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) Exercises.** USSOUTHCOM regularly organizes a series of exercises that promote regional security by enhancing regional cooperation and building partnership capacity in counter illicit trafficking operations, humanitarian/civic assistance and disaster relief, and peacekeeping training. Exercises include Tradewinds, PANAMAX, Peacekeeping Operations for the Americas, Unitas Atlantic and Unitas Pacific, Beyond the Horizon/New Horizons, Medical Readiness Training Exercises (MEDRETEs), and Fuerzas Aliadas Humanitarias.
- **Defense and Security Education.** DoD invests in the education of defense and security personnel from the hemisphere – both civilian and military – because these types of training opportunities and exchanges further mutual understanding of shared security challenges, deepen civil-military relations, and create strong personal bonds. Officials from the Americas can enroll in DoD educational institutions such as the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, and the Inter-American Air Forces Academy, among others.

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